

Message Text

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SUBJECT: VISAS: ARAB STUDENTS ON A-2 VISAS

REF: STATE 181230

1. FOLLOWING INFORMATION SUPPLIED KEYED TO ORDER IN REFTEL:

A. 242 STUDENTS WERE ISSUED A-2 VISAS AT THIS POST DURING FY 1975.

B. 196 STUDENTS WERE ISSUED F-1 VISAS.

C. A-2 VISAS ARE ISSUED TO THOSE STUDENTS WHO PRESENT A NOTE FROM THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS STATING THAT THE SAG IS PAYING FOR THEIR EDUCATION AND THEY ARE OBLIGATED TO WORK FOR THE SAG UPON THEIR RETURN TO SAUDI ARABIA.

D. THE ORIGIN OF THIS PRACTICE IS UNKNOWN AND HAS BEEN GOING ON AT LEAST SINCE 1966.

E. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE NONE OF THESE STUDENTS HAS ADJUSTED STATUS. SAUDI IN GENERAL DO NOT SEEK TO EMIGRATE TO THE U.S.

F. WHILE THIS POST IS PERHAPS NOT IN AS GOOD A POSITION AS THE EMBASSY TO EVALUATE THE EFFECT THAT A DISCONTINUANCE OF THIS PRACTICE WOULD HAVE ON RELATIONS WITH THE SAG, WE DO NOT FEEL THAT ANY SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS WOULD RESULT. A REORGANIZATION OF THE SAUDI MINED ATTACHE'S OFFICE IN NEW YORK WOULD BE NECESSARY,
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AS THE PRESENT PRACTICE IS TO HAVE THAT OFFICE FIND THE STUDENT

A SCHOOL IN THE U.S. AFTER THE STUDENT HAS ARRIVED IN THE U.S.

G. CONS OFF DOES INTERVIEW A-2 APPLICANTS. MFA NOTE MAKES QUESTIONS REGARDING I-20 AND FINANCIAL MEANS IRRELEVANT.

2. COMMENT: THIS POST HAS FOUND THE ISSUANCE OF A-2 VISAS TO STUDENTS TROUBLESOME NOT BECAUSE THE STUDENTS ARE MALA FIDE NONIMMIGRANTS, BUT BECAUSE MANY ARE MALA FIDE GOVERNMENT STUDENTS. THE MFA HAS PROVEN ITSELF SUSCEPTIBLE TO INFLUENCE AND HAS ISSUED NOTES TO CHILDREN OF PROMINENT SAUDI CITIZENS WHICH ALLEGE THAT THE SAG IS PAYING FOR THEIR EDUCATION AND THAT THEY ARE COMMITTED TO WORK FOR SAG UPON RETURN WHEN SUCH IS NOT THE CASE. FOR MAY PROMINENT SAUDIS GETTING AN A-2 HAS BECOME A PRESTIGE SYMBOL (E.G., SOME HAVE VIGOROUSLY REFUSED TO ACCEPT F-1'S EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD AN I-20 IN HAND, BECAUSE THEY FELT THE F-1 WAS A QUOTE SECOND CLASS VISA UNQUOTE). WE WOULD ESTIMATE THAT APPROXIMATELY 40 PER CENT OF A-2 APPLICANTS SHOULD BE CLASSIFIED F-1 EVEN BY THE PRESENT RULES UNDER WHICH WE OPERATE. SUCH A REFUSAL RATE OF APPLICANTS BEARING MFA NOTES COULD BECOME AN EMBARRASSMENT TO BOTH THE USG AND SAG. THIS POST IN CONCLUSION RECOMMENDS STRONGLY THE ABOLITION OF THIS PRACTICE, BECAUSE NOT ONLY IS IT CONTRARY TO LAW BUT IT IS ALSO LIKELY TO BE A SOURCE OF MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE USG AND SAG.
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